

Embargoed until 16 Nov 2023, 11.15pm.

Transcript of Minister Josephine Teo's virtual interview at the 4th European AI Alliance Assembly (16 Nov 2023)

Q1) Could you share the vision and efforts of Singapore to ensure trustworthy AI in your country?

AI safety is now an issue of concern for all countries, both large and small. At the same time, I think we all see the tremendous opportunities that AI can bring. AI certainly has transformative potential, and we believe can be harnessed for the public good. And for a country like Singapore that is fundamentally constrained by the size of our workforce, our interest in AI is really grounded in its potential as a force multiplier.

However, we are also aware that the use of AI on a widespread basis is accompanied by a growing sense of unease in several areas, including how they can be used for scams, cyberattacks, and for misinformation and disinformation. Building a trusted ecosystem is the core foundation for harnessing AI for the public good. And this means putting in place standards and governance frameworks to ensure that AI is developed and deployed safely and responsibly, and that we can mitigate risks, while maximising the room for innovation.

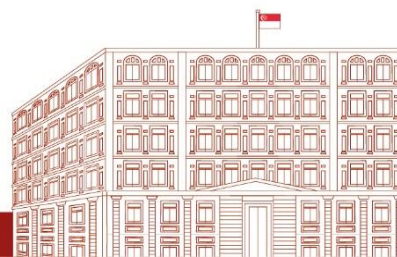
We believe there are three levels of trust building that are necessary for this ecosystem to operate and function.

First and foremost is public trust. To accelerate the widespread adoption of AI, everyone needs to feel that the technology is fair, safe and beneficial. Governments play an essential role in helping to build the public trust, to address concerns that AI will bring disruption to workplaces and livelihoods. That is one area that we must work on. We must also set up guardrails for the ethical development and use of AI. And critically, we must also ensure that organisations are accountable and transparent about the use of AI.

As a result of this thinking, Singapore was probably one of the first countries in the world to put in place an AI governance framework. We did this in 2019. At the time, we were probably the first in Asia.

Now, building public trust is not just for the government alone. Industry must also communicate to the public its commitment to uphold standards and adhere to AI governance. Organisations must at the same time help their workers to adapt to AI adoption. So, these are the foundations of public trust.

Second, the trust between government and industry is also very important. Harnessing the best of public and private sector capabilities allows us to experiment with AI technologies in a safe and responsible way. In June this year, Singapore open sourced our governance framework and testing toolkit called AI Verify. This allows us to involve model and app developers, third-party testers and the research community to collectively contribute to more trustworthy AI. I am glad to share that over 90 companies, including major players like IBM, Google, Microsoft, Salesforce, and Red Hat,



are now part of the AI Verify Foundation to help us make this toolkit work in a more robust manner. We also welcome European companies to participate in AI Verify. We also recently extended this toolkit to generative AI through a first of its kind evaluation sandbox. Again, we very much welcome the EU to be part of this initiative.

The third area is the trust that we will need between governments. There is certainly a need for countries to come together to harmonise the approaches around AI governance. AI innovation needs common rules, standards and benchmarks to take off. With the EU, we have signed the EU-Singapore digital partnership in February this year. This may be a non-binding framework, but it covers a very comprehensive range of issues including digital trade facilitation, cross border data flows, cybersecurity, and emerging technologies such as AI and standards.

So, we hope that we can explore ways to promote interoperability between our AI governance frameworks. They may come from a slightly different philosophy, and they may not be identical, but there will always be value in us trying to find common ground. And this is the reason why Singapore in the US announced our recent collaboration. We recently went through a successful mapping between the US National Institute of Standards and Technologies' AI Risk Management Framework and Singapore's AI Verify. So, we are confident that the foundation for international collaboration has already begun to be built. And it will help to promote innovation that is responsible and safe and can lead to tangible benefits for both our people as well as our businesses.

Q2) How does Singapore see itself contributing to international cooperation for trustworthy AI globally?

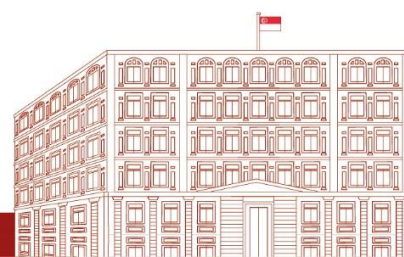
I will take a step back to first suggest that when it comes to international cooperation, we really must try our best to be inclusive. And by that, we mean that all the countries whose populations whose people and businesses will be impacted by the widespread development and deployment of AI. We all want to be part of this conversation, and we don't want to be left out.

We are also at a critical point in AI development, where working together as one international community will give us a better chance of ensuring that everyone can fully reap the benefits of AI in a safe and secure manner. We must therefore continue to promote multi-stakeholder exchanges to bring diverse perspectives to the table. It cannot be a few speaking for all of us.

And so, we want to continue to encourage our colleagues to be inclusive in ensuring that the smaller as well as developing countries have a voice in shaping a healthy international environment for the trustworthy use of AI.

Now, let me also share that within the region in ASEAN, the member states are of course in different stages of AI development and digital access. Yet, we have found it possible to work together to develop an ASEAN guide on AI governance and ethics. This allows us as a region to have a baseline to guide our progress. We will continue to contribute as well as to build on this work when Singapore chairs the ASEAN Digital Ministers' Meeting next year.

If we then broaden this cooperation to the UN level, we certainly welcome the setting up of the high-level advisory body on Artificial Intelligence. It will complement the various ongoing Digital



Initiatives at the multilateral level and bring together an important cross-regional and diverse group.

Among the member states, Singapore is supporting our global digital objectives through the Digital Forum of Small States, which comprises 108 members. This is a community through which we share experiences and support one another in building capacity, so that everyone can participate meaningfully in the global AI conversation. These efforts will complement other ongoing global conversations on AI such as the G7 Hiroshima process.

And earlier this month, I was at the AI Safety Summit that was held in the United Kingdom, which brought together various stakeholders to discuss the important issue of AI safety, especially with foundation models. Participants cut across governments, industry experts, as well as the research community and civil society. It was announced at the Summit that Singapore will be working with the UK AI Safety Institute to collectively advance capabilities and expertise in AI testing. Ultimately, we want to co-create trustworthy AI that can effectively benefit the economy as well as society.

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